

THEATRICAL HISTORY MADE ON THE OLD BOWERY'S STAGE

Most Famous Actors of Their Day
Appeared in Playhouse Soon
to Be Torn Down

AND now two more of the old landmarks of New York are to go. After having stood side by side for fifty-eight years the Old Bowery Theatre and the Atlantic Garden are to give place to a skyscraper.

There will never be another playhouse just like the Old Bowery Theatre. Times have changed in the ninety years—it was erected in 1826 during which it has been a home of drama. No other playhouse in New York carries one so far back in theatrical history in this country as the Old Bowery, and a roster of the actors who have appeared upon its stage would include almost all the famous players of the last century.

When it was erected the use of illuminating gas was brand new and its footlights were the first to flare with the new illuminant. In those days people spoke in wonder of how the light would dart from the wings and run a lighted torch along the front of the stage, a brilliant glare following him until the whole area was lighted.

There have been so many premieres in the Old Bowery that a mere schedule of them would fill columns of this paper. Probably one of the best remembered was that of Mrs. Francisquay Huttin, who on its boards introduced to America the then modern French school of dancing. The dancer, petite, pliant and charming, promitted from the wings in her abbreviated skirts, kissing her hands and showing her even teeth in a charming smile, ready for the applause she was sure her more appearance would enforce. Instead one shocked cry of astonishment came from the spectators, and all the women, with more than half of the men, rose in indignation and left the theatre. From those who remained rose a storm of hisses and catcalls and the curtain was rung down upon the weeping artist. Mrs. Huttin danced the next night, but she wore Turkish trousers.

Contrary to the general idea, the Old Bowery was not erected on the site of the old Bull's Head Tavern, but next door to it. For a long time there has been a discussion of the feasibility of maintaining a first class theatre on the Bowery to rival the Park Theatre, which stood opposite to where the Post office now is. George Astor, then the little king of New York, formed a company, associated with him Gouverneur Graham, James A. Hamilton, George T. Brown, T. S. Smith and Charles Gillett, and erected a theatre capable of seating 3,000 persons. It was an imposing structure, and all through its vicissitudes, for it was burned to the ground no fewer than four times, its original appearance has been maintained.

At first it was known as the Bull's Head Theatre, the name following naturally its contiguity to the cattle market; later it was called the New York Theatre, then John Broughman's Bowery Theatre, and finally under the management of Hackett & Hamblin, settled down to plain Bowery Theatre.

George Hamblin, in a fit of patriotism stimulated by the Anderson riots at the Park Theatre, for a time called his house the American Theatre as a defiance.

At first the prices were 50 cents for seats in the boxes, 25 cents for the gallery and 12 1/2 cents, or a shilling, for the pit and the upper galleries. Later prices were advanced to 75, 37 1/2 and 25 cents, only to fall again, even in the early days, and many a patron sat in a box seat and saw the elder Booth in Shakespearean roles for a 25 cent place, while gallery gods and pit gods paid for less than half that sum.

At the period when the Bowery Theatre was opened theatregoers demanded more for their money than they get now. No paltry two hours and a half for them; they came at 6 o'clock and remained till 12, demanding entertainment all the time. Two plays in one evening were usual, and Richard the Third, an appetizer, could be followed by "King Lear" as the real piece de resistance. On the opening night, October 23, 1826, the 25 cent play was the comedy "The Road to Rome," followed by the farce "Raising the Wind."

Henry Wallack and his gifted wife acted there before the place was a year old, and upon its stage Thomas Archer, the famous English tragedian, appeared for the first time in this country, as did James Fisher, Louisa Lane, afterward Mrs. John Drew, made her debut there, and Herr Kline gave the first exhibition of tightrope walking ever seen in this country.

The building was destroyed by fire

on the night of May 8, 1828, but rose again in the short space of ninety days with the first good theatre orchestra ever seen in this country, which the manager had brought over from Europe. While the same manager, by the way, invented the press agent, being the first to employ a man to write pieces for the papers about his place and its people.

Junius Brutus Booth, the father of Edwin, walked the boards on October 15, 1828, and for many a year afterward, as *Richard III.*, and two years later the star of Augustus A. Addams made his rise. Many esteemed Addams as good as Forrest, and all of that period agreed that he was the only one who had a chance to shake Forrest from his place as the foremost American tragedian. It has been written of him that he "had a voice he could modulate to the softest notes of a flute; and with it he could also out-rant any actor who ever tore passion to rags. Had he been temperate he would have become the country's greatest actor." "Jack Cade," played for many years after his death, was written for him, but on the night of its production he was so overcome by liquor that, though the house was packed with his admirers, he could not play it. He died in 1851.

T. D. Rice, the first black face minstrel ever seen in England, went to that country from the Bowery Theatre, where he produced his famous *Jim Crow*, and Tyrone Power, here made his debut as *Terry* in "The Irish Tutor" in 1835. The first dog drama was introduced there, and in the same year James Sheridan Knowles began his splendid career.

Charlotte Cushman, foremost in her day, applied for employment in the theatre on September 2, 1836, and after a tryout was engaged for three years at \$25 a week for the first year, to be increased \$10 a week in the second year and the same amount in the third. She had no money to buy costumes for *Lady Macbeth*, her first part, and Hamblin advanced the cash, deducting \$5 a week from her salary until he had been reimbursed.

The house was again destroyed by fire September 22, 1836, but was rebuilt by the following January, when Dan Marble appeared in "Sam Patch." Again a fire, February 18, 1838, just as Hamblin was about to begin an engagement with the highest priced cast in the theatre selling for 25 cents. When it opened again, May 6, 1839, Mme. Celeste, the wonderful, was in the cast.

She is described by a contemporary as "effulgent in form, handsome of face, with sparkling black eyes and features that possessed more mobility than usually falls to the lot of mortals." She excelled in male parts. Henry Elliott, a wealthy Baltimorean, sitting in a box one night so admired her that a friend offered him upon it he, Elliott, would marry her within a month. Elliott won his bet and Mme. Celeste got a husband who soon dissipated his fortune and she was obliged to return to the stage.

Charles Keen made his premiere on this stage and "Jack Sheppard" was first produced there with Mrs. Signa in the title role. The first water drama was produced there with a full rigged ship sailing on the stage in real water and the "Battle of Waterloo" in 1840 introduced fifty horses, 200 supernumeraries, baggage wagons, etc. The play had a remarkable run in England later.

Junius Booth, Jr., and his wife and J. W. Wallack and his wife made their first appearance there before the house again burned down, April 25, 1845. Three years later Hamblin, still the manager, brought over the Signora Ciccia to appear with Julia Tarnhill in ballet. There was not good between the women. "Julia" was the favorite with the Bowery audience and when they feared that their darling was being displaced they nearly tore down the house over the manager's head. The police stopped the riot, but not before benches had been torn up and much damage wrought. John Lester and the famous Lola Montez, favorite of kings, were almost the last great actors Hamblin introduced before he gave up the management.

It was John Broughman who, succeeding Hamblin as actor-manager, in 1856 struck "Columbia" in "The Stage Struck" (Columbia), a coach and train to the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, and there on the same evening played in "Pocahontas." George L. Fox, father of all



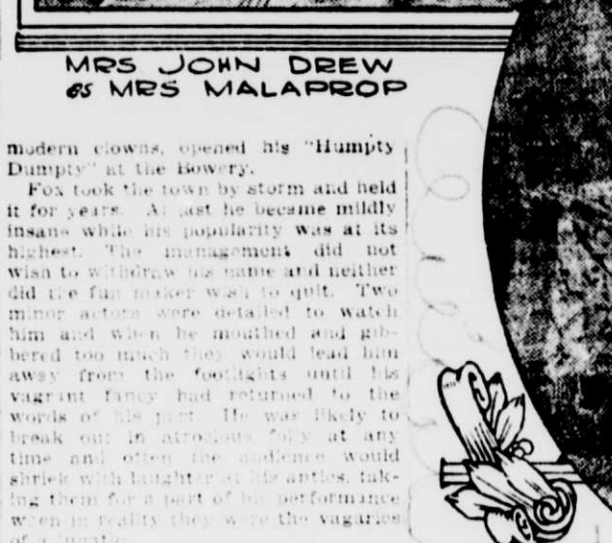
GEORGE L. FOX
as HUMPTY DUMPTY.



EDWIN FORREST
as KING LEAR.



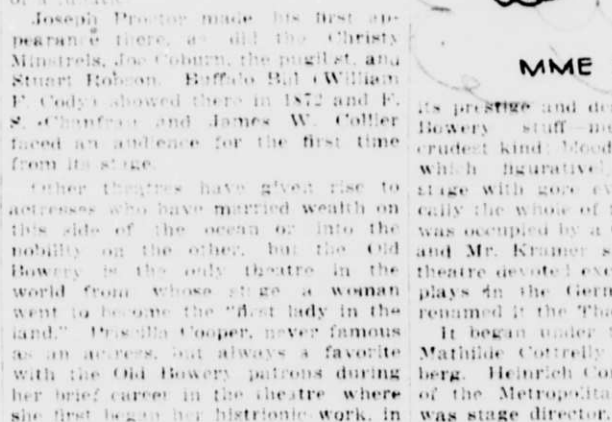
JOHN DREW
as SIR ANDREW AGUE-CHEEK.



MRS. JOHN DREW
as MRS. MALAPROP.



JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH
as RICHARD III.



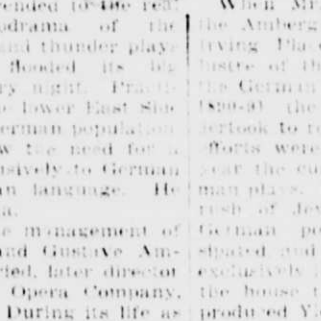
MME. CELESTE
as PRINCESS KATHERINE.



GEORGE L. FOX
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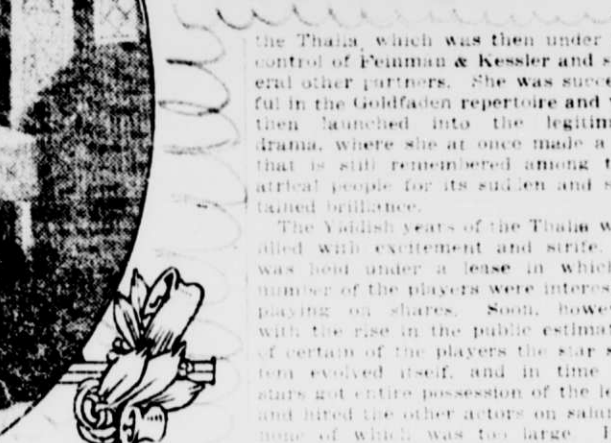
THE OLD BOWERY
THEATRE IN 1860



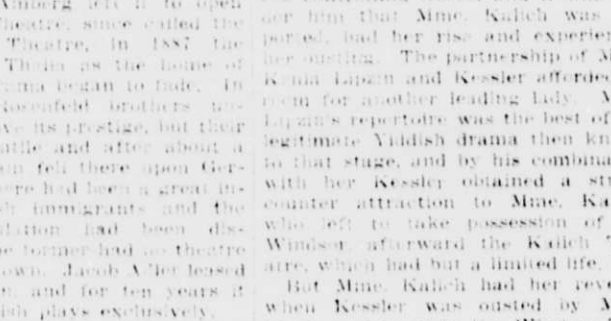
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THE OLD BOWERY
THEATRE IN 1860

Atlantic Garden, Which Goes With It
to Make Room for Sky-scraper, An-
other Landmark of Old New York

Jacob Gordin used to speak from the stage in defence of his plays. With frowning front and in heated language he was accustomed to come before the curtain between the acts, even without the formality of a call, and answer his critics, while gallery gods and everybody else who wished would interrupt and fling him back as good as he sent. His body was carried into the playhouse after he was dead, and the whole of the Yiddish East Side flocked there to attend the funeral services.

Scarcely less famous than the theatre in whose life it has participated for more than half a century is the Atlantic Garden. Many are the actors and actresses who made their bow there. On its stage George M. Cohan had one of his first tryouts, and Joe Welsh, Emma Carus, May Irwin, Rose Beaudant, Will H. Fox, Grace La Rue, Maude Raymond, Cole and Johnson and the Elinor Sisters are others who there first endeared themselves to an appreciative public. It was a great gathering place for notables of the political world, and never a man who rose to power or prestige on the East Side, even to the present generation, who was not seen there. Patrick Keenan, once City Chamberlain, Judge Paddy Dwyer, Big Tim Sullivan, John B. Sexton and Albert C. Smith had their own special table there at which one vacant chair stood for long after Big Tim's death.

The Atlantic Garden was established in 1858 by William Kramer and has always been managed by him and his sons, Albert and William. Kramer, four years over from Shakespeare, Germany, had no idea of the place he was destined to build. The old Bull's Head Tavern had been closed as a place of entertainment and turned into a stove factory. There were plenty of saloons on the Bowery, but none of them had the German flavor.

In the yard in the rear of the ancient tavern, then, he set up a tent and invited his German friends to visit him, drink beer from German steins and partake of light wines, play a sociable game of pinocle and sing the songs of the fatherland. They came in such numbers that soon Kramer was able to buy the old Bull's head and its great volume of songs, and the old establishment became a place of entertainment.

The front of the building was remodelled, as it was again in later years, but some of the old beams were retained and they are still supporting the front of the present establishment. It is said that Washington passed under them many times in the revolutionary war, for there is a tradition of which it would be difficult to rob some of the older patrons of the place that the Father of His Country once made the Atlantic Garden his headquarters.

Whether he did or not, the Garden

soon became famous as a bit of Germany transplanted to the Bowery, and it was not long before Kramer was obliged to buy the coal yard in the rear, stretching to Elizabeth street, which had replaced the bull pens of the ancient tavern days, enclose it with roof and walls and erect a stage whereon singers, musicians and actors should furnish entertainment while his guests were enjoying their meals, their beer and their wines.

It was amusing, sometimes, to watch a group of men who had been "doing the Bowery" drop into the Garden, especially before the electric light and various missions had altered the character of the famous street. On the first sign of inebriation the head waiter would smilingly admonish them that there were ladies present, and move away. If they persisted the head waiter would return, still smiling, but with two assistants, and say something like this:

"Gentlemen, we are sorry to disturb you, but this is a place for families. I regret extremely that this is necessary, but you have made it so. We take our own, returning to you the money you have paid for it," and wave his hand toward whatever might be upon the table, which the waiters would remove instantly. If the men still persisted, several other waiters appeared and the unwelcome guests were escorted to the street as quietly and unobtrusively as they would permit.

Probably the two features for which the Atlantic Garden was most widely famous were its late orchestra and its grand orchestra. There had never been a late orchestra in this country until Mr. Kramer brought one over from Germany and established it in the Garden under the direction of Mme. Blochschmidt, in 1873, and its fame spread throughout the country. There was a time when for Germans to visit New York from other cities and return to their homes without having listened to it was an unheard-of thing. The old orchestra membership, of course, passed away with time, but never since that day has the Garden been without this feature.

The orchestra was, when imported in 1865, one of the curiosities and wonders of the country. Stories of its beauty and its great volume of sound travelled about and thousands made special trips to have their ears dinned by its melodious horns and its resonant drums. Mr. Kramer bought it from the Grand Duke of Baden. He never told even his most intimate friends the amount he paid for it, but it was always understood that a great many good American dollars were needed to induce the royal gentleman to part with this instrument.

It was returned to Germany and is still at work there, but a larger orchestra, pneumatic, was installed in its place.

STRANGE THINGS ABOUT CATS

WHEN you see a cat on a narrow backyard fence leisurely making its way along you may wonder why it does not lose its balance and fall off.

If it chanced to jump from one fence to another, or down to the surface of the earth you are amazed that it exerts in its ability to land squarely on its feet instead of its head. It may fall or leap so far that it will turn a complete somersault once or twice, yet it will land on its feet. The cat has wonderfully been credited with a crank handle power to guide itself to its feet. There are many cats without tails and these show no deficiency in this feline power.

The real explanation is complicated. It has to do in a manner with the cat's ability to see in the dark and also to see when its head spins around. Like whirling dervishes and whirlwind dancers, cats always seem to be facing the audience, no matter how swiftly or how often they spin around. Cats are able to turn all the way around in a half circle or in any fraction thereof in order to act against the force of gravity and cause their lighter feet to touch terra firma first.

"Cats are clever," books say, because they always alight on their feet. But it is not cleverness and it has nothing to do with the intellect at all. It is the same sort of instinct which often makes dogs before lying down go round and round in a circle. This canine trait is an instinct left from the dogs' ancient ancestors. These they could lie down and take a nap they had to run around in a circle

to press down the grass and bushes to make a place for themselves.

Similarly the cat has inherited its agile trunk muscles as well as the instinct to swing its heavier body above its lighter feet. The sinuous, graceful curves of the cat are thus made to serve its hereditary agility. The force of gravitation is here again defeated by living tissues.

FOREHAND MAN'S PLAN.

WE have bought needed things on instalments and been glad of the chance; but, said a forehand man, "then we always had that debt hanging over us, even with the most careful advance figuring on income and outgo we sometimes found ourselves unable to pinch up to pay, because there had dropped up to deplete our income some other need for money that we had never anticipated. We now avoid all such difficulties by what we call our accumulation instalment plan."

"When we have decided on what we want to buy and know the cost we divide that amount into instalments that we think we can take out of our income comfortably and then each week we put that amount aside. Occasionally something turns up so that we cannot do this, but when this happens it isn't as if we had an instalment due that must be paid; if we have to we can skip a week without disturbance (anybody).

"But usually at the end of the period set we have the cash in hand and are ready to make the purchase. Thus we own outright whatever we buy and we keep always out of debt."

ANY DAY AT CONEY ISLAND

BY BILL



"I'd just love to try that. Don't it look awful dangerous and terrible?"



Girls, fakers, hot corn men—everything—everybody.



Always there is some little girl hanging on.



Beer everywhere—between dances, between coasts, between walks.